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BISHOP POTTER'S  
SECOND CHARGE.

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THE



PROPER METHOD

MATTER AND OBJECT

OF

MINISTERIAL STUDY.

A CHARGE TO THE CLERGY OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
IN PENNSYLVANIA, DELIVERED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,  
PHILADELPHIA, WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 1850.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. ALONZO POTTER, D.D., L.L.D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

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## CHARGE.

*My Brethren of the Clergy:—*

In addressing you a year since, I announced my intention of presenting you, should God permit, with a series of connected counsels on some of the most important of our common duties, as Ministers of Christ. I then referred to *self-culture*, in its largest sense, as the most essential of these duties, since a clergyman's personal character and endowments form the instrument with which he works, whether for his own welfare, or for the welfare of others. It is an instrument, too, which he may fabricate to a great extent with his own hand, thus assuring himself of its temper and worth; and in proportion as in this respect, he takes heed to himself, in the same proportion will he win honor to his Master, blessing to mankind, and a glorious recompense to his own soul. The more holy his heart, the more resolute his will, the more vigorous, comprehensive, active and wellfurnished his intellect, and the more perfect his power of imprinting his own convictions and aspirations on the souls of others—so much the greater will be his capacity for good, and so much the nobler the crown that awaits him at the last day.

In my first charge, I endeavored to point out the peculiar position of our ministry in this age and land, with some of the effects which that position ought to have, in modifying our professional efforts and our methods of self-culture. I proceed on this occasion to consider the subject of self-culture by itself, and shall confine myself, after a few prefatory remarks, to one of its branches, and to that branch considered under but one of several aspects.

That branch of self-culture which I shall first discuss, may be called the *intellectual*, as distinguished from that which is *moral* and *spiritual*. To form a mind well stored with knowledge, and well trained for enlightened and thoughtful effort, is of course the primary object of intellectual culture. To prepare that mind to convey to others, through language and other modes of utterance, the precise notions and feelings with which it is itself possessed, is another object of the same species of culture;—and to qualify it for conducting well

and wisely the practical affairs of life, for leading the minds around it to act on their own acknowledged convictions, and to rise gradually through effort and reflection to higher views of duty and enjoyment, is a third and most important end. We have thus three distinct objects of intellectual training, whether that training be conducted by others, or ordered by ourselves. These may be designated by the three words *logical*, *rhetorical*, and *administrative*—it being the aim of the first to develop and perfect the power of thought—of the second, to cultivate the powers of utterance or expression, taking those terms in the most extensive sense—of the third, to bestow the wisdom and efficiency which qualify us for the practical duties of our station. They are objects which must be pursued, of course, more or less in common, and the powers with which we become invested, through a culture so extended, will be employed often simultaneously in one and the same sphere. If we consider them with respect to the duties or responsibilities of a Christian minister, and as pursued by him after he enters his profession, they are powers of which the first will find its most appropriate sphere mainly in the study—the second mainly in the pulpit and desk—the third mainly in the parish and among the people. Whatever I have to offer then, under the head of *self-culture for the clergy*, will belong to one of the three following topics :

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER A STUDENT.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER A PREACHER.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER A PASTOR, AND SERVANT OF MEN FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

In thus directing your attention in the first place to the cultivation of the intellect, I mean not to disparage that which must ever be regarded as paramount—the cultivation of the heart. Never would I forget, nor have forgotten the fact, that a devout and conscientious spirit is infinitely more important than any knowledge, though it could compass all mysteries, or any eloquence, though it could speak with the tongue of angels, or any power, though it could remove mountains. I postpone this topic, in form, not because it is secondary, but mainly because being of primary and universal necessity, it should not only be an object of special care, but should blend itself with every branch of ministerial self-culture. Whether engaged as a student, or called to proclaim to men the riches of Christ, or employed in the manifold, delicate and perplexing cares of a Pastor's office, there is no guard, no guide so needful, as a humble, dutiful,

and pious temper of mind ; and this, therefore, will be insisted upon at every step of our inquiry.

Beginning life, as we all do, without knowledge or mental development, our intellectual growth is the result, in part, of culture applied in our earlier years by others—in part, of circumstances over which we have little control, and in part, of voluntary efforts of our own, more or less deliberate. It is to the last of these alone that we refer, when we use the terms *intellectual self-culture*.

As we are never too old to improve morally, so never should we suppose that we are too much advanced in years, or too well accomplished in mind, to supersede the demand for earnest and enlightened effort, that we may enlarge our store of knowledge, correct our intellectual defects, and rise to new and larger views of truth. Life is a race, whose goal stands directly over the tomb, and we are never to count ourselves as having wholly lost or wholly won the prize, till we gain permission to lay aside our mortal, that we may put on immortality. Who will be prepared to enter on the higher progress which belongs to the “Life beyond life,” but he who has kept his faculties bright by use, and who never ceases to regard himself as a pupil in the school of experience and of Infinite Wisdom ?

How inglorious, with a never ending career before us, to rest on laurels already gained ! More inglorious still, to rest before laurels have been gained—before one worthy trophy of our fidelity and power has been attained. To underrate our power over ourselves, over our whole intellectual as well as moral state, is the mistake of every period of life—especially is it the mistake of those who have reached its meridian, and who begin to bow beneath the yoke of tyrant habits. Never should we think it too late to supply deficiencies in our knowledge, or to repress evil tendencies in our manner of thinking or reading. Because all may not become deeply learned, because many can never hope to dazzle the world by the splendor of their creative genius, are they therefore to consign themselves to sloth or despondence ? Let them rather rise and quit themselves like men. We all can form ourselves to habits of mind more just and active than they have yet attained. All can cultivate those moral dispositions, which predispose us to love the truth, and aid us in understanding it—and all can gradually gather new light to guide them amid the cares and duties appointed by God. To assume, then, that there are in our previous education no mistakes wholly irretrievable,

that there is in the way of our future improvement no insuperable obstaele, and that there is hardly any summit of excellenee to whieh we may not at length aseend—this is the true wisdom, and to act bravely and unflinchingly upon it, is the sure way to do great things for ourselves, and for mankind. We may not win indeed all we aspire to; but we shall not fail of the proud conseousness that we have done what we could, while the pleasure of constant self-improvement, and the privilege of rendering increased and ever increasing service to others, will be our ample and suffieient reward.

To a Christian minister, the objects of intelleetual culture are both general and speial—the former embraeing such as are common to him with other men—the latter including such only as pertain to his profession. As a *man*, he is, in eultivating his intelleet, to aim first of all to unfold and discipline, in due proportion, the several faculties which are employed in the perception and appreciation of truth, such as memory, judgment, imagination and reasoning; and in the secon place, he is to apply these powers diligently and wisely, in acquiring exact knowledge where such knowledge is possible—and in forming judieious opinions, where they alone are within his reaeh. As a *minister of Christ* he is to cultivate the special powers and habits that fit him for the mastery of Divine Truth; and the largest amount of such truth, he is to collect alike for his own edification and for the instruction and benefit of others. These two objects of study, the development of intellectual power and the aequisition of knowledge, are by no means so distinct as may at first sight be thought. They are in truth to be sought and attained for the most part, by the same methods and in the same line of study. He who would adopt a system of self-eulture, which will best furnish and enrieh his mind with positive truth, will usually find it in that which most contributes also to quicken, strengthen, and subordinate his various faculties of thought. And on the other hand, he who would find the readiest way to develop and invigorate all the higher powers of the intellect, ought in general to select such studies as open to him the largest treasures of true knowledge. The severer studies, that most tax our powers of reflection and invention, are precisely those whieh best supply the keys with which we unlock the noblest and most prolific truths in Nature, Providence and Revelation. The immediate object of a true eulture, is to place our minds in a commanding position, whenee they can overlook the whole field of actual, and to some extent, even of possible knowledge, and above all, to

endue them with the power and will to explore that field. Every where and always its object should not be so much to read books, as to mark, learn, and inwardly digest books that are good—those which embalm and treasure up “the precious life-blood of master spirits.” Its aim should be through books, to master subjects; to study facts only in reference to principles—and it should rejoice rather in the power, which can think and investigate wisely, and which is thus potentially endowed with all knowledge, than in the present possession of any number of facts or even principles, however great.

With these preliminary remarks, I hasten to the main subject of this charge, which is the proper *method, matter and motive* for ministerial studies, in our own church, age, and land. In other words, I propose to answer the three questions that seem most to concern those students of Divine Truth, who are charged with the solemn trust of acting as messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord.

### I. HOW OUGHT WE TO STUDY?

### II. WHAT OUGHT WE TO STUDY?

### III. WHY OUGHT WE TO STUDY?

I. How ought we to study?—In attempting a reply to this question, I shall not enter upon any metaphysical questions respecting method. My aim is to present practical hints, and my remarks will bear rather on the spirit and general intent with which we ought to study, than on the precise principles, philosophical or logical, which may be conceived to apply to the question. My counsels, too, will address themselves rather to the prevailing wants of the clergy, than to such individual emergencies as may arise. Few maxims can be laid down which will hold without qualification in every case, and to each one's own judgment must be referred the special system that he ought to adopt, to give the best effect to his efforts at self-improvement.

If asked then, how ought clergymen to study, I should answer,  
1. Earnestly. 2. Comprehensively. 3. Candidly. 4. Reverently.  
5. Freely. 6. Systematically and progressively.

1. *Earnestly.* I use this term in a sense, perhaps somewhat more extended than is usual. I understand by it not merely warmth and activity, for these may be expended on objects the most insignificant and unworthy. Men are often earnest and intensely so in pursuit of gold—of pleasure—of power and even of revenge. Nor do I mean merely the fervor with which studies even the highest may be pur-

sued—if it be for their own sake only, or for the sake of some transient benefit or pleasure which they afford. The really earnest man is one who has an object before him worthy of the zealous devotion of his best powers. The earnest minister is one whose heart's desire and prayer to God is, that he may bless and save his flock; and the minister who is earnestly studious in the sense which becomes him, and in that intended in this place, is one who subordinates all study and all intellectual effort to the one work of winning souls. With him, study is not so much an *end* as a *means*. It is not the grand employment within which his efforts and aspirations are to expend themselves. It is the arena on which he trains himself for a manly and ever-during conflict with the powers of evil and error within his own breast, and in the world without. It is the school in which he arms himself for the noblest of all victories—a victory over his own ignorance, indolence and self-will—for the noblest of all ministries—a ministry to the souls for which Christ was content to die. In keeping ever before him that purpose—a purpose so definite, so practical, so high and heavenly, he has a pledge, that his studies will not only be ardent and diligent, but effective also;—and not effective only in adding to an intellectual wealth, which may take to itself wings and fly away, but yet more effective in gaining both for himself and them that hear him, a saving and imperishable wisdom.

Such practical earnestness will do much to guard us against *idleness*. He who would be really diligent in business, must be fervent in spirit also. Sore are the temptations, brethren! that beset us to fritter away the hours that should be given to severe and generous intellectual toil. Between the claims of friendship and the exactions of society, between the intrusions of the idle and the demands of the busy—what with visits to the sick and afflicted—what with preaching the Gospel from house to house—what with discharging public, though not official trusts, and meeting our domestic duties, he needs indeed a stern purpose, who would combine the habits of a true student with ministerial fidelity. Time is left to us, but it is time sadly broken up and rarely to be called our own. What then is to rouse us to this sternness of effort, but a strong conviction that study is that without which, our most sacred duties cannot be well discharged? Away with the thought that such duties can be met aright by men, whose minds are not quickened and strengthened by constant reading and reflection—whose stores of information and range of thought are not constantly enlarging. What are the terms of our commission?

Does it not charge us to go teaching every man and warning every man, *i. e.* supplying instructions and exhortations adapted to every variety of character, every stage of culture, every mood of mind? Do we not preach to men, roused to the most earnest activity by surrounding events—men accustomed to the utmost freedom of discussion, and to daily and stirring appeals from the press? Are we not to dispense truth to those of every state and condition in life—from the humblest in mental stature to those most exalted—from babes in Christ to full grown men—from the dullest intellect and the most torpid conscience, to the clearest of apprehension, and the most fervent in faith,—from the insolent and reckless scoffer to the keen and sagacious but perverse sceptic? Yes, to each we are to give his portion of meat in due season. We are to bring forth out of our treasury not things old only, but things new and old. We are to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. We are to banish the too prevalent notion that the pulpit is a place for nothing but iterated truisms, for erude assumption or inconsequent reasoning. We are to beware lest reproach fall on our religion, through teaching which is rash or superficial. We are not to be always *laying* again *the foundation*, but we are to *go on unto perfection*, striving to unfold the boundless wealth of Christ's doctrine, as it bears on the diversified relations and vicissitudes of this our earthly lot. And can he be expected to do this, who does not study and study with his might? Brethren! how frugal should we be of time! How should we gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost! How should we bid away from us all the companionship that kills time—all foolish talking and jesting—all vacant or roving thoughts—all unnecessary rest and recreation! How should we have printed on our remembrance, the solemn thought that souls entrusted to us, freighted with the full weight of an endless blessing or an endless curse, are daily departing to meet their God.

Such practical earnestness will also guard us against *literary Epicurism*. This is one of the besetting sins of those who call themselves students. Too often they read, rather for amusement or the gratification of some private fancy, than to fit themselves for the great battle of life. Too often the importunate demands of our current literature are allowed to thrust aside that robust culture and that specific line of research, which would make us able ministers of the New Testament. I counsel no studied disregard of our original propensities—no needless crucifixion of natural or acquired taste; I

appreciate too highly the value of a cordial and hearty devotion of the mind to its work, and know too well how much we need it as a counterpoise to intellectual inertia, and to the manifold distractions and allurements by which we are surrounded. Still it should not be forgotten, that self-indulgence is always dangerous, and self-restraint and self-direction always a duty. To yield ourselves passively to the impulse of an intellectual appetite, regardless of the claims of our profession, is too much like being vassals, where we are commanded to be masters. It is less ignominious than bondage to sensual appetite; but it may be doubted whether it is always more innocent. Where propensities belong to our higher nature, there the obligation to control them aright, would seem to be only the more imperative and sacred. Many is the intellectual Epicure, who flatters himself in the very spirit of the Pharisee—that he is not as other men—not as the idle, the frivolous-minded, when to the eye of the All-seeing, he lacks all that is most needful to the true scholar.

How important then to keep distinctly in view, the work with which we are charged. We have promised “out of the Scriptures to *instruct* such as are or may be committed to our charge.” We have promised to “be *ready* with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines; which are contrary to God’s word, and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations as need shall require and occasion shall be given.” Are such vows duly kept, if we devote to alien studies those hours which are needed for professional learning? Be it admitted (as unquestioned truth) that our duties do require not only theological knowledge, but also a generous erudition in letters and even in science; still all should be held in direct subordination to our proper duties. We are encompassed on every hand, by those who are hungering and thirsting for spiritual sustenance. We are pressed by questions, which touch on the very foundations or strong walls of our faith. We are interrogated minds by strained to their utmost tension, and whom nothing can satisfy, but counsels, just, clear and large-minded. Never was it more necessary to fall back on God’s word, wisely expounded, and on a distinct and firm apprehension of great first truths. Is this then the time for a luxurious and effeminate culture? Is this a day for what we call light reading? or for a merely secular and unsanctified scholarship?

This practical earnestness will serve further to guard us even *in our theological studies*, against such as are *too frivolous on the one*

*hand, or too purely speculative on the other.* Our path through life is encompassed with intellectual as with spiritual dangers. If we rise above the dead weight of indolence, and withstand the seductions of a lettered self-indulgencee, we shall then encounter the hazard of wasting our strength on all but useless inquiries. How few among those who seem even earnest in study, achieve much for their own minds or for the world ! As there have been cultivated ages and nations, incapable apparently of all creative effort, so in every age and in every nation there are individual scholars who doom the highest powers of their souls to inaction, or waste them in laborious idleness. In the intellectual decline of the ancient Greeks and Romans, they soon reached a period when all the fires of original genius seemed to die out, and those gifted people aspired henceforth but to swell the funeral train or watch beside the grave of departed greatness. And is it not so with individuals even now ? Are there not scholars, even in our profession and our communion, who expend high talent in elaborate trifling, in verbal disputation, in childish eristicisms, or in studies that seem to have defined for themselves no aim or purpose ? Are there not those who linger long over insoluble enigmas, in metaphysical or sacramental theology, and devote to the vain attempt to settle questions that have defied the sagacity of the ablest among the sons of men, that time and zeal which are needed to furnish us for our daily duties ? Even in studying the Bible or the standards of the Church, we can have no sure guarantee against such errors unless we carry to the task, minds disciplined and enlarged by a thoughtful contest with the practical cares of life. We should beware of study, divorced from action, as carefully as we should beware of action unenlightened by study. What we need are sober, robust, and discriminating minds that will not perpetually mistake shadow for substance, nor exalt questions the most puerile into issues that involve the fate of nations or the existence of the Church.—Can we read the history of the past and yet not see, that while principles, and great ones doubtless, underlie most protracted controversies among Christians, still those controversies owed much of their virulence and duration to unduly magnifying points which were merely incidental or insignificant ? And does not that history show further, that every attempt to settle by authority, points even the most grave if they are points that elude our understanding by their subtlety, or defy our comprehension by their vastness, is an attempt as short-lived as it is futile ?

It becomes us to denounce no line of study which is likely to open new mines of truth—to proscribe no scholastic labors, which can cast new light on the word or will of God. But to a Christian Pastor—and this must ever be the office of a great proportion of our clergy—to a Christian Pastor, called to deal directly with the consciences and understandings of men, pressed with practical questions that bear urgently on their salvation or edification,—to him it may surely be forgiven if he leaves to others that which pertains to a too curious philosophy, or a too recondite lore.

It must be acknowledged however that in our time, the tendency to studies too frivolous, or to speculations too abstruse, is not that against which we are most called to guard. The most momentous questions that bear upon Practical Religion, and upon the economy of social and even domestic life, are now re-opened; and they are discussed, not only by the learned and wise, but by those of every condition. Discontent with prevailing institutions, and prevailing maxims, is clearly one of the features of the age, and multitudes of all ranks and degrees of intelligence feel called to attempt their improvement. This disposition is increased, if not created, by the stupendous innovations wrought through science and industry, and through that heroic love of adventure which exhibits so much of the enthusiasm and indefinite longing of the days of chivalry. We may not wonder then that the human mind is disposed at such a time to arraign opinions and usages, the most venerable, demanding by what right they still rule over men. Nor need we wonder, that intoxicated by its own activity, and by a presumptuous self-confidence, it should now and then be borne violently towards the wildest and most monstrous conclusions. If ever there were a call for soberness of mind, in those who act as ambassadors for Christ—if ever they should pray and strive for the wisdom, that steer will clear alike of extravagant novelties, and of a blind and bigoted conservatism, it is surely now. And where can that wisdom be found, but in a thoughtful and earnest devotion to our practical duties. It is through such devotion alone, that we shall be likely to work our way to a due understanding of the real wants and dangers of our time. It will train us to those practical views and to that habitual clearness of judgment, which form our best safeguard against speculative error. It will demonstrate the absurdity of all utopian dreams of human perfectibility, whether in the individual or in the state. It will awaken our understanding and our

sympathies to the precise evils, social and ecclesiastical, under which we labor. It will reveal the utter deceptiveness of many pretended claims and promises; and when we attempt the arduous work of improving or reconstructing institutions, it will keep ever before us man's essential state as a being by nature alike ignorant and sinful, who can be served and permanently exalted only as he can be roused to exertion in obedience to the law, and in dependence on the grace of Christ. Such minds will not wait to evolve a complete theory in respect to the organization of labor, the principles of Education, or the Ideal of a Church, before they begin to work, or in order that they may work. They will begin by working—working patiently and hopefully, that thus new light may gradually break on their conceptions of that better state towards which they should aspire.

2. But if we ought to study earnestly, so should we do *comprehensively*—in a large and Catholic spirit. To be earnest in quest of knowledge, as a help and guide in our cure of souls, is not sufficient, if we are wanting in breadth of mind or in range of information. Mere zeal and ardor without these will often transport us into bigotry, or urge us toward heresy. To refuse first to reconsider our opinions even on doubtful matters—then to associate them with whatever is most sacred and important, and then to denounce and persecute all who hesitate to accept them, is the too common result of ignorance or of a contracted mind. To refine much again even on points the best settled—to trace them to their supposed consequences, under the direction of a hard and peremptory logic, to neglect the rectification of our conclusions, by the plain sense of Scripture and the ancient Fathers, and by the deep and impresible convictions of mankind—this is another characteristic of an uncatholic temper, and it has proved fruitful alike in heresy and in intolerance. Who can rate too highly, Brethren, that large-minded and docile spirit which keeps itself open to light from whatever quarter? Who can prize too dearly the aid which different branches of knowledge can yield to each other. How unexpected and impressive the confirmation of old opinions, which often flashes from studies apparently the most remote from our own. From how many sources, critical, historical, moral and even physical, may we not gather aid in elucidating the sacred text? How can nature help us in understanding the Bible, and the Bible again in apprehending aright many of the laws of nature? How do the same facts and principles change their aspect, as we view them successively, from the stand-point of a

free and critical reason, and from that of mere human authority. How different the teachings of God's pure word, uncorrupted by tradition, unobscured by philosophy, falsely so called, from the conclusions of a stern, dogmatic Theology. Do men approach the great questions of religion with nothing but an imperious, practical understanding? We need not wonder that they descend rapidly towards the depths of a Deistic Rationalism. Do others apply to the same problems, only the maxims of a philosophy more spiritual and transcendental? We need not be surprised if their conclusions too are at variance with Scripture, and with observed facts. So long as we accept but one primary source or criterion of knowledge, be it authority or reason, be it blind submission to any teaching, short of God's own word in its unquestionable import, or be it the intuitions of the lower understanding or of the higher consciousness; or even of the Christian affections: in each case, the ultimate conclusions will be found wanting in the breadth and comprehensiveness which characterize the truth as it is in Jesus. That truth is adjusted with respect to our whole complex nature, soul, body and spirit. It speaks to all the different powers and susceptibilities of our minds. It was intended to give play and development to every faculty; and while in its rudiments it stands on a level with the apprehension of the child, it mounts in its higher declarations, far above the range of any mortal intellect, and calls us to bow down in wonder and adoration, confessing that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts.

3. Again. As we should study, earnestly and comprehensively, so in the third place should we do it, in a *candid* and *teachable* manner. We all start on the race of life without knowledge; and the measure in which we attain it, must depend not only on the earnestness and comprehensiveness of our inquiries, but also on the strict integrity and frankness with which we conduct them. A perverse or disingenuous temper will cast deep shadows over our intellect, even though it be surrounded by the effulgence of a mid-day sun—causing us to put darkness for light, and light for darkness. So much there is of intrinsic difficulty in many of the subjects that challenge our attention, and so closely do they press upon some of the deepest and most powerful of our sensibilities, that we cannot be too much on our guard against adventitious embarrassments, superinduced by our own prejudices and passions. If the Gospel contains doctrines and precepts that commend themselves to every man's

consciencee, so does it contain others, that are foolishness to the speculative and earthly-minded Greek—stones of stumbling to the sensual and pageant-loving Jew. If questions arise that transeend all reason, and lay a heavy tribute on our faith, how many more are there that lay burdens on our integrity, and that will ever be rejected, except by the honest and sincere heart. Our voyage towards the haven of a complete and harmonious system of Divine Truth—does it not lie between opposing, yet nearly impending errors? Does it not call us to accept facts apparently most incongruous? Are we not to find our way as Scientific Theologians between the Scylla of a too scrutinizing understanding and the Charybdis of a blind credulity—between empty formalism on the one hand, and a vapory, unsubstantial spiritualism on the other,—between such views of God as are too pantheistic, and such as are too anthropomorphieal —between the theories of antinomian grace and those of a presumptuous self-righteousness,—between an abnegation of all moral liberty, and the claims to a licentious and God-defying freedom,—between a faith, so subjective as to be beyond the reach of any intelligible test, and a faith so purely objective as to leave no appeal to the primitive and irrepressible voice of God in the soul.

Brethren! can we trace the history of controversies so often renewed and yet still unsettled, without feeling that there is much in our religion to teach us our imbecility, much to write upon our hearts a solemn sense of the unfathomable depths of the divine counsels? Can we consider how from age to age, men of unbounded learning, and of the most sagacious intellect, have addressed themselves to the divine mysteries, and yet have reached no conclusions that men equally learned, equally able, and equally upright have not denied! Can we consider this as we ought without feeling that there are matters too high for us, and that while we may form opinions, they should be held as things doubtful? And when to the intrinsic darkness that belongs to these subjects, we add the difficulties that embarrass many minds, because of their peculiar position or temperament—because of early prepossessions or long established habits,—does it not become us to look with forbearing eye on much that to us may seem error? To denounce men, because they fail to reach conclusions the same in all respects with our own, as wanting in understanding, or as deficient in honesty, is a sad commentary upon our own intelligence and generosity. It is to make our minds and opinions the standard of all orthodoxy. It is to claim, in our

own behalf, quite too exclusive an exemption from the frailties and infirmities of our common humanity. When we meet what seems error, is it not well, at least, to hope that it may have, to those who hold it, the very aspect—the ‘counterfeit presentment’ of truth; or that, though questionable even to them, it may still stand associated in their judgment with truths so certain, or with interests so momentous, that they dare not assail it! Far from us be the unkind and unbrotherly spirit which refuses to extend to those of the same household of faith, and to all who name the name of Christ, some measure of the charity which we demand at their hands.

And while such considerations urge us to be indulgent toward others, let them constrain us to be watchful and jealous in respect to ourselves. In seeking truth, never let us suppose that we “have apprehended.” All through life, let us proceed as learners; and let us remember that there are few sources from which we may not gather some help in understanding the works, ways and will of the Almighty. Vigilantly and anxiously should we watch, lest unholy desire or passion cloud the clearness of our intellectual eye. Earnestly should we strive, lest we prefer our own opinion before the judgments of truth, or cling more to that which will make for our present ease or credit or pleasure, than to that which will redound to our everlasting well-being. Never may we forget, that if we would know the mind of Christ, we must love truth better than party—and covet more the glory of him who can rule his own spirit, than the transient triumph of one, who beholds his adversary silenced perhaps, but not convinced—defeated it may be, but neither enlightened nor made holy.

These remarks have grown so unexpectedly and so unduly under my hand, that I must hasten to conclude. I have said that as our studies should be conducted earnestly, comprehensively, and candidly, so again they should be characterized by reverence, by freedom, and by progressiveness. On these last topics, I can merely indicate some of the principles, which as it seems to me, ought to regulate us, in our efforts at intellectual self-culture.

4. Our studies and investigations should be conducted in a *reverent* spirit. The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ are every where placed before us, as the paramount objects of our regard and submission. It must always become beings, so short-sighted and erring as men, to keep silence when the voice of Infinite Wisdom is put forth, and to bow before its teachings with a filial and confiding faith.

That voice speaks now, obscurely, through outward nature—now, more clearly, through the deep instincts and intuitions of our own souls. Now it comes to us clear and full, through the trumpet of the Gospel. Now it speaks more vaguely and ambiguously from hidden oracles in the Old or New Testaments. Now it is God himself or his messengers full fraught with his own Spirit and wisdom —now it is uninspired, yet most holy sage or Priest, or lawgiver. Now it is a proclamation, sounding forth from the collected intelligence or the universal conscience of our race. Now it is the conscient judgment of those who, acting in their official capacity, would define the faith of the Church. Now it is the accordant judgment of learned doctors and fathers, speaking each for himself; and now the individual judgment of the authorised ministers of Christ, when preaching publicly or from house to house. In all these cases, the matter spoken, if true, is in one sense divine; and though not true, the source whence it comes, entitles it to be considered with respect and discussed with care. He who has the fear of God before his eyes, and who feels properly his own fallibility, will sit with docility at the feet of all who are able to teach; and he will at least presume, until evidence shall overthrow the presumption, that where there is lawful authority, there is ability too. In the father, at the head of his family—in the law-making and law-administering power at the head of the State, and in the ministers and pastors of Christ's flock, he will recognize a rightful, though not unlimited or arbitrary authority; and he will feel that the best interests of mankind and the truest welfare of his own soul, require that that authority should be upheld and revered.

Wo betide the people who have thrown off all allegiance to a superior power! and wo, too, to them, whether they be a nation, a church, or individuals, who in their pretended reverence for God, withhold all submission towards his earthly representatives!

5. But if our studies should be reverent, so also should they be *free* and *manly*. God has not given us inquiring and investigating minds for naught. To no man, who has the capacity, has he denied the right to think, or to ask a reason for the faith or the obedience which is claimed at his hands. In proportion as we have true reverence, we shall exalt the will and teachings of the infallible Jehovah above those of frail and fallible men; and in the same proportion, will it be our privilege to question those who profess to speak with a superhuman wisdom, or by a superhuman authority.

The largest freedom and the deepest reverence are not only compatible; they mutually imply each other—there being no true freedom, except where there is a sense of our limited powers and our essential dependence. Nor any true reverence, unless it be the spontaneous homage of our souls to an authority seen to be alike legitimate and competent. A blind and unreasoning faith cannot be more grateful to God, than an ignorant and senseless devotion. He best honors his Heavenly Master and his earthly guides who is able to vindicate the allegiance he pays them. After all that a reverent reason can comprehend there will still be a boundless expanse, where implicit trust in the Divine Truth and goodness will be our only resource; and to prepare us for making our way with unfaltering wing over that great sea, we need to have seen for ourselves that God's ways are just and true—his works great and marvellous. We need to have certified ourselves that the word in which we are called to trust is really divine, and that many of its disclosures have been verified by experience, and others expounded by reason.

Where there is true modesty—a sense of our own weakness—a perception of the superior wisdom of others, and a profound veneration for God's word, there freedom of inquiry is safe and salutary. Where that temper of heart is wanting, all professions of reverence for authority—all outward tests, however rigidly enforced, will fail to induce true wisdom, or guard us against error, heresy and schism.

6. I should gladly dwell, did time permit, upon the importance of *systematic*, as opposed to *desultory* studies, and of study aiming as the progressive development of truth and of our own powers, as opposed to that movement without progress, that reproduction of the same materials in new forms, which characterizes too much, perhaps, both of our preaching and our habits of reading. There is a deal of miscellaneous reading, especially in our day, which can do little to enlarge our knowledge, while it is sure to impair materially the mind's vigor, and its power of concentration. There is a diligence in preparing discourses for the pulpit which lays little tax upon our higher faculties, and contributes hardly anything to the range or precision of our own knowledge, or that of others. To aim at a constant *advance* in our views of divine truth, and in our power of unfolding it—to be satisfied with nothing short of progress in theological learning, and in the clearness, precision and compass of our opinions—and to be bent on building up our flocks not only in the first principles, but in the full and harmonious stature and

proportion of Christian doctrine and Christian practice, is that, as it seems to me, towards which all should aspire, and to which all, according to the measure of their capacity and opportunities, should attain. But on this topic I may not dwell.

I have discussed but one of the three questions, which I proposed for consideration when I began, and this has been treated in a manner, I am conscious, which is by no means complete. Let me close with one or two questions, which I would present for our common benefit. At our ordination, as priests, we promised that we would be "diligent in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh." That promise was preceded by an awfully solemn exhortation that we would "*consider* how studious we ought to be in reading and learning the Scripture, and in framing the manners both of ourselves and of them that specially pertain unto us, according to the rule of the same Scripture, and for the self-same cause, how we ought to forsake and set aside as much as we may all worldly cares and studies." My brethren of the Clergy, let us often ask ourselves whether these, our paramount duties as students and as pastors, are duly considered. This promise to be diligent in reading the Scriptures, and in all auxiliary studies, is it faithfully kept? Are we students indeed, and is the Bible the one great subject on which the best of our labors are expended? And these sacred studies, are they prosecuted with a temper so devout, candid and humble, that we may expect in their behalf, the special aid and benediction of Almighty God? Are we diligent also in prayer, and in framing the manners, both of ourselves and of them that specially pertain to us? Thus only can we acquit ourselves of our solemn vows and obligations. Thus only can we presume upon the cheering and sustaining presence of God's good Spirit in our hearts and on our toils, and thus alone, will we win at last the "Well done good and faithful servant" of our Lord.

"These messengers," says Archbishop Leighton, speaking of the clergy, "should come near the life of angels, always beholding the face of the Father of lights; but if their affections be engaged to the world, their faces will still be that way. Fly high, they may, sometimes in some speculations of their own; but like the eagle, for all their soaring, their eye will still be upon some prey, some carrion here below. Upright, meek, humble and heavenly minds, then, must the ambassadors of this great King have, and so obtain his

intimaey ; mounting up on those wings of prayer and meditation, and having the eye of faith upwards. Thus shall they learn more of his choicest mysteries in one hour, than by many days poring upon easuists and schoolmen and such like. This ought to be done, I confess ; but above all, the other must not be omitted. Their chief study should be that of their commission, the holy Scriptures. The way to speak chiefly from God, is often to hear Him speak. ‘The Lord has given me the tongue of the learned,’ says the evangelic prophet (chiefly intending Christ,) ‘to speak a word in due season to the weary.’—(Aye that is the learnedest tongue when all is done.) But how? ‘He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth my ear to hear as the learned.’ (Isaiah 1, 4.) Thus we see how these ambassadors have need to be friends, and intimate friends with their Lord. For if they be much with God in the mount, their return to men will be with brightness in their faces, and the law both in their hands and in their lives, and their doctrine shall be heavenly.”